

CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL COMPETENCY

March 17, 2021
2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Video-Conference

MINUTES

Attendees: Judge Sanchez-Figueroa (Chair); Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson (Ex-Officio Chair), Isabel Alvarez, Juana Brown, Troy Brown, Samuel Bruder, Sandra Cardone, Lia Cestaro, Patrick (PJ) Deak, Esther Harris, Zarin Kapur, Meghan Korn, Daisy Ortiz, Michaelangelo Palmieri, Felix Rodriguez, Spiro Uyar, and Shawna Woodard

Absent: Juanita Halepas, Cristina Johnson, Philip Strambler and Ewa Wojewodzki

Judge Sanchez-Figueroa called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

The minutes from the February 10, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.

GAL Training Update

Zarin Kapur gave an update on the introductory diversity and cultural competency course the ACCC will provide this summer to the new Guardians ad Litem. The course will be co-facilitated by Zarin and Lia Cestaro. More information will be provided at a later date.

Diversity Week 2021

The Committee agreed to schedule Diversity Week 2021 the week of October 25th. Given the uncertainty of COVID-19, we will plan to offer the program on a virtual platform. Sandra Cardone and Isabel Alvarez will co-chair the event with Michelangelo Palmieri serving in a supporting role. A Diversity Week Subcommittee meeting will be scheduled soon to begin searching for a keynote speaker.

Updates/Discuss Racial Justice Document

PJ Deak introduced the topic concerning technology and Access to Justice. Technology creates greater access, but it also presents its problems when people do not have access to it. How can this committee support this endeavor in terms of diversity and inclusivity? We also recognized this issue is more of an economic inequality rather cultural. Remote rooms are currently set up in each judicial district as being one answer to the digital divide. A discussion ensued about other resources and ways the Branch may be able to facilitate access:

- Educate the public on how to register for E-Services to file their documents
- Articulate reasons why the court needs to see the party on video and why calling in on the telephone is sometimes not acceptable.
- Make hotspots available for use at home.
- Partner with local libraries for internet access, computers and video cameras.
- Seek available funding via the COVID Relief Bill.
- Hold focus groups to hear the community's concerns and needs.

New Business

Judge Sanchez-Figueroa will serve as the chair of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Competency. Chief Justice Robinson will continue to be present and active on the committee while supporting Judge Sanchez-Figueroa in this new role. Shawna will confirm her availability for the remaining ACCC meetings in the 2021 calendar year, and will schedule them in Microsoft Teams accordingly.

Announcements

Lia Cestaro spoke briefly about a racial and social justice initiative the CSSD Multicultural Affairs Unit has created and is in the process of implementing for CSSD Juvenile Probation. The initiative is being rolled out in 3 phases:

- 1) All Juvenile Probation Supervisors and Management received a 4 hour training on racial and ethnic disparities within CT's juvenile justice system called *The Color of Justice Revisited*. About a month later, the same audience received a 3 hour *Candid Conversation* (akin to a Courageous Conversation) wherein participants were taken deeper into the issues of racial and ethnic disparities through conversation with their colleagues.
- 2) ALL Juvenile Probation field staff will receive *The Color of Justice Revisited* session between March and June.
- 3) ALL Juvenile Probation offices will attend a *Candid Conversation* specific to their office location, so that they can have conversations around racial and ethnic disparities with colleagues from their office whom they work with every day. We expect to hold approx. 10 of these sessions between July-Dec.

So far, the feedback from supervisors who have already completed the module has been very encouraging. She will share those evaluation results if requested. Isabel Alvarez mentioned that the Employee Education and Development Unit is preparing for something similar that they are calling *Living Room Conversations* and she would like to connect with Lia to talk more. PJ Deak volunteered his office to be a pilot for *Living Room Conversations* when they are ready to be rolled out.

The meeting adjourned at 3:19 p.m.